

Mill Lane Primary School

Wellington Street, Stockton-on-Tees, County Durham, TS18 1QX

Inspection dates 9–10 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- This is a highly inclusive school where pupils from differing cultural backgrounds work together harmoniously.
- Strong parental partnerships contribute well to pupils' learning, particularly those at an early stage of speaking English as an additional language.
- Pupils make a good start to their learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where they quickly develop independence, confidence and communication skills.
- The resource base in the school helps pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties to make good progress.
- Teaching is good. Well planned lessons ensure that pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to learning because they are well trained.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. The respect they show to one another ensures that a happy and safe climate for learning exists across the school.
- Leaders and governors are ambitious for the school and make careful checks on learning to ensure that each individual pupil achieves well.
- Pupils take part in a wide range of sporting and cultural activities which make a good contribution to their physical well-being and to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Partnerships with other schools and organisations contribute well to pupils' learning and the school's continuous improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Action taken by leaders is improving the standards reached by pupils at the end of Year 2 and Year 6, but pupils' skills in writing are not as strong as those in reading and mathematics.
- Although teachers use a range of approaches that secure good learning, the highly effective practice of some teachers, which result in rapid progress, are not used consistently across the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 19 lessons or parts of lessons including the support provided to groups of pupils within lessons.
- Inspectors talked to senior leaders including governors, groups of pupils, teachers and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work and examined a range of documents, including the school's own analysis of its performance, achievement information and safeguarding procedures.
- Few parents expressed their views using the online questionnaire (Parent View) but inspectors sought their views through informal discussions at the school gate and around the school.

Inspection team

Janet Bennett, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Dave Shearsmith

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Mill Lane is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is well above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below average.
- The school hosts specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs for 22 pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties.
- The school serves a community of diverse cultural heritage. Approximately a third of pupils is from the locally-settled Pakistani community and a third is White British. An increasing number of pupils from Eastern European and other countries are enrolling at the school.
- Half of the pupils speak English as an additional language, which is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well above average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children that are looked after by the local authority.
- Many more pupils leave or join the school mid-way through their primary years than is usually the case. Consequently, a significant proportion of pupils assessed through statutory arrangements at the end of Year 2 and Year 6, have not attended the school continuously since the beginning of the respective key stage.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in writing by:
 - ensuring pupils have more opportunities to write in subjects other than literacy and to sustain their writing over extended periods
 - improving handwriting skills so that all pupils develop an effective and efficient style.
- Extend the most effective practice of some teachers to all classes with a particular focus on:
 - improving marking so that pupils are consistently given clear points for improvement and time to act upon this advice
 - ensuring that pupils always know how to be successful in lessons and have opportunities to reflect upon and improve their own learning and progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter school in the Nursery with skills that are well below those typical for their age, particularly in their language and communication.
- The skills of bilingual staff and the positive relationships established with parents ensure that those children who have little or no spoken English quickly settle into school and benefit fully from the well planned opportunities for play and learning.
- Children make good progress towards the levels expected for their age although few have reached them across all areas of learning by the time they enter Year 1.
- Well planned teaching of sounds, letters and numbers in Key Stage 1 ensure that pupils gain the confidence they need to apply these skills independently in reading and writing and in solving simple mathematical problems. Although pupils' skills at the end of Year 2 remain below average they are improving securely, particularly in reading and mathematics. Improvements in writing are not as good as in other subjects because teachers do not fully maximise opportunities for pupils to regularly practise them. As a result pupils' skills are well below average in this aspect of literacy.
- Progress is good in Key Stage 2 because teaching consistently builds well on what pupils have already learnt.
- Pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties provided for in the specialist resource provision make good progress because staff provide support that is tailored well to their individual needs.
- Pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs in classrooms receive the same good levels of support. As a result they are fully involved in lessons and make good progress in their learning.
- Across the school staff are skilled in helping pupils who are learning English as an additional language to quickly extend their vocabulary and understanding so that they can apply their skills with confidence when working independently.
- In recent years the standards reached by pupils at the end of Year 6 have been below average and sometimes well below. Outcomes from the most recent statutory assessments indicate that standards have improved and the proportion of pupils reaching the expected levels in reading and mathematics are broadly average.
- Pupils make good progress in writing. However, the inefficient handwriting styles of some pupils and too few and often missed opportunities for them to practise writing across a range of subjects inhibits the rapid progress they need to make in order to reach the expected levels by the end of Year 6. Consequently, standards are well below average in this aspect of English.
- Good levels of challenge and support for the more-able pupils ensure that they achieve well and reach standards above those expected for their age in all subjects.
- Pupils eligible for pupil premium are effectively supported in lessons by well trained staff. Consequently, there are no gaps in the attainment of those pupils supported by the funding and that of other pupils in school and they make the same good progress.
- The promotion of community cohesion is strong and any form of discrimination is rigorously tackled, ensuring that every child, irrespective of their background or starting point, is given an equal chance to succeed.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is consistently good and sometimes outstanding.
- Across the school teaching is characterised by:
 - Clear demonstrations that ensure pupils understand what to do
 - Well established classroom procedures that ensure time is used well
 - Good use of questioning to check pupils' understanding and to extend their learning
 - Activities that are well matched to pupils' learning needs
 - Strong partnerships between teachers and support staff which ensure that all pupils are well supported.
- In the most effective lessons, teachers ensure that pupils know how to check their own work and to improve it so that they make rapid gains in their learning. For example, in a Year 6 literacy lesson the teacher carefully explained to pupils what they needed to include in their work in order to be successful. As a result pupils were highly engaged and challenged themselves to produce writing of a high quality by the end of the lesson. This does not happen in all classes.
- All work is diligently marked; however, the feedback that pupils receive does not always provide clear guidance to help them to improve. Where marking is highly effective teachers give precise points for improvement and ensure that pupils are given time to respond to this advice in the next lesson. This approach contributes significantly to pupils learning but is not used consistently across the school.
- The sensitive support and positive role models provided by staff in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the resource-base classes ensure that pupils engage fully in the activities planned for them and develop the confidence to use language to enrich their play and learning.
- Very precise use of language and a range of exciting and stimulating resources ensure that pupils with language and communication difficulties engage well in lessons. Clear explanations and regular checks on learning by staff ensure that pupils make good progress in lessons because they understand how to be successful.
- The introduction of practical resources and daily basic-skills sessions are rapidly increasing pupils' confidence in mathematics, whilst story-telling events, book weeks, and carefully planned lessons provide pupils with the skills and confidence they need to organise and present their own writing.
- Reading is taught well and practised regularly in lessons. Reading for pleasure has been successfully promoted by making good quality books available to pupils across the school day. The school's success is evident in the comment of one pupil who said, 'I don't like reading, I love reading!'

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Parents speak positively about the respect and understanding that pupils show to one another and value the extent to which pupils' good behaviour promotes cultural harmony across the school. Staff provide a strong lead, and the positive role models they provide contribute well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils are keen to take responsibility. For example, 'Playground Friends' make a strong contribution to school life, ensuring playtimes are a positive experience for everyone.
- Pupils conduct themselves well at all times and are exceptionally polite to staff and to visitors. They demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning in lessons and always try hard to do their best. They respond quickly to instructions from staff and this ensures that lessons progress at a good pace. However, occasionally, some pupils lose concentration, especially if activities do not inspire them to contribute actively, and this slows the pace of their learning.
- The curriculum is well planned to promote pupils' social skills and well-being. Consequently, pupils say they feel safe in school and have a good understanding of how to stay safe in a range of situations including when using the internet.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides clear direction for the work of the school and has been successful in creating a strong team of staff who have a shared commitment to continuous improvement.
- Investment in good quality professional development for staff and rigorous approaches to performance management ensure that teaching is good and improving.
- Activities to monitor the work of the school are used well to identify strengths and appropriate priorities for further improvement
- High priority is given to promoting pupils' basic skills and, as a result of action taken, standards are rising in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leaders carefully check the progress made by individual pupils and are swift to provide additional help when it is needed. Those pupils starting school mid-way through their primary years are carefully assessed and supported to ensure that they quickly get on track with their learning.
- The same good leadership and careful checks of progress are also seen in the resource base. This ensures that teaching is tailored to the precise needs of individual pupils and swift action is taken should learning slow.
- Attendance has improved and is now average because it is carefully checked and any absence or lateness is rigorously followed up.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and effectively support the high quality care and support provided for pupils.
- A range of successful partnerships contribute well to pupils learning. For example, teachers from a neighbouring secondary school provide support for the more-able pupils in mathematics and links with local business provide reading volunteers to give extra help to those pupils who need more opportunities to practise their skills.
- The new sport funding has contributed to the eagerly awaited outdoor sporting facilities which were opened to pupils for the first time during the inspection. They provide daily opportunities for pupils to take part in physical activity and team games, practising the skills that are effectively taught in physical education lessons.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors use data well to compare the performance of the school to that of others.
 - They provide a good level of challenge to senior leaders regarding the attainment and progress of pupils.
 - Regular visits to classrooms, discussion with pupils and attendance at training ensure that they are well informed and able to evaluate at first hand the impact of action taken by school leaders on teaching and achievement.
 - Governors make prudent spending decisions that take full account of the school's most important improvement priorities and use pupil premium funding well to ensure that eligible pupils receive good quality support from well trained staff.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	111539
Local authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	426007

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	212
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jonathan Robinson
Headteacher	Carol O'Brien
Date of previous school inspection	8 June 2011
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